



City of Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Monthly Meeting

Vickie Choitz, Managing Trustee
Anika Van Eaton, Co-Manager
Trustees
Thomas Bent
Lisa Cook
Silvana Dinka
Thomas F. Galligani, Jr.
Colleen Moran
JT Scott
Rand Wilson

Meeting Minutes

Location: Online via GoToWebinar Platform

Date: February 8, 2022

Time: 6:03 PM

Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Silvana Dinka, Tom Galligani, Colleen Moran, JT Scott, Anika Van Eaton, and Rand Wilson
- Economic Development Staff: Jennifer Mancia, William Blackmer

Meeting Minutes

- V Choitz: Meeting called to order at 6:03pm. Quorum established. L Cook was not in attendance.
- W Blackmer: House rules about technology delivered.

1. Review and Approval of January 11 Meeting Minutes

- Motion: T Bent makes motion to approve 1/11. C Moran seconds the motion. V Choitz noted that the date needs to be update from "January 11, 2021" to "January 11, 2022". No objections to this edit are made.
 - Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 8-0 approving 1/11/22 meeting minutes.

2. W Blackmer: Suggestion to take an agenda item out of order and discuss the schedule for upcoming meetings while almost all Board Members are in attendance. V Choitz agrees.

Scheduling next meeting:

V Choitz: Board has typically met 2nd Tuesdays at 6PM, but this time may be a conflict for JT Scott.

- JT Scott: Yes, 2nd Tuesdays are generally finance committee meetings. Tonight, I need to leave at 6:30PM to attend that meeting
- V Choitz: What about the 3rd Tuesday or 1st Tuesday of the month?
- JT Scott: I tend to be more available on those Tuesdays.
- V Choitz: Does anyone have standing conflicts with the 1st or 3rd Tuesdays? No conflicts.
- W Blackmer: I will propose the 3rd Tuesdays on a recurring schedule with the next meeting on 3/15.
- R Wilson: 4/19 is the week of school vacation, so this may be a conflict for many.
- V Choitz: Should we plan for the 4th Tuesday then in April? General consensus is that 4/26 will work. JT, would it be easier if we met at 5:30pm on the 4th Tuesday in April?
- S Dinka: I cannot meet before 6:00PM
- V Choitz: Let's stick with 6:00PM then.
- W Blackmer: I will send out calendar invites accordingly.

3. Linkage Funding Update and Proposed Process Improvement

W Blackmer: As you can see in the memo that has been share \$233,958 was received in late January. We had a previous small uncommitted balance. Given the incoming funds and given the project timelines that we are working with, J Mancia and I are proposing and strongly recommending that the Trust consider voting on proposed projects on a different schedule. We are proposing a twice per year schedule with votes occurring in May and November. We are hoping to better align the timelines of grantee contracts and make votes on large sums of funds less times per year.

- V Choitz: It is a really good idea because we have a lot of investments, grants, and priorities and they are starting to become challenging to track. Now that we are getting significant funding, the more we can put this on a regular schedule, the easier this will be for coordination purposes.
- A Van Eaton: What would we be voting on in May if this was implemented?
- W Blackmer: We would track what additional funds come in before the May meeting. We are expecting a significant amount. May would then become the next opportunity to vote on renewals, allowing for a common point of origin for multiple renewals.
- J Mancia: W Blackmer and I have also been revisiting the language used in RFPs to create a uniform template. This recommendation is from an efficiency standpoint; we are trying to make processes more repetitive and create more space for staff to focus on strategic planning.
- A Van Eaton: So, we would potentially vote on AACA and Per Scholas in May?
- V Choitz: Yes, along with a possible job training scholarship program, municipal apprenticeship feasibility study, and another training program we will discuss later this evening. These could all be potential votes for the May meeting.
- V Choitz: One thing to note is that the Trust doing this work in Boston does have one annual investment period so we are being more flexible than this similar model by allowing two investment periods in our annual schedule. It sounds like there aren't any objections, so I think we can use this process going forward. Let's make sure everyone can be at the May meeting to the extent possible.
- A Van Eaton: Would the meetings be on May 1 and November 1 as outlined in the memo or just at our normal monthly meetings.
- W Blackmer: Yes, it would be at the regular monthly meetings.

3. Updates on 2021 Board Approved Funding Priorities

A) Industry Specific Trainings:

- W Blackmer: This ties well into what we were just discussing. The Per Scholas contract did end on 1/31/22 so I am in regular communication with their team about their progress toward their deliverables and I will have a more robust report at next month's meeting. I have also started a conversation with AACA and will start a conversation with SCALE to give an opportunity to discuss what programming they may be running in the upcoming year and confirm that they are still on track to meet their goals as they wrap up their contracts.
 - V Choitz: It will be important for the Board to be provided with outcome reports as soon as possible upon contract completion to align with our plan to vote on potential renewals in May. We should begin discussing these outcomes more possible at the April meeting to position ourselves well going into the May meeting.
 - T Bent: Can we get these reports ahead of time?
 - V Choitz: Cadence has been to send out meeting materials on the Friday before the Tuesday meetings.
 - W Blackmer: With sharing the reports, are Board members interested in seeing the performance-based deliverables or are they interested as well in seeing demographic data too?
 - C Moran: Would you be able to send out the categories so we can see the full scope of the data?

- W Blackmer: Yes, I will say that there is not 100% uniformity with the reports at this time and this is something that Jenn and I are working on improving.
 - Also thank you JT, for joining. I see you are heading to your other meeting. We will be in-touch.
- T Bent: Demographics are important with regards to Somerville v. non-Somerville participants and to know who is attending these trainings. Also, we want to see job placement information.
- V Choitz: It will be a good idea to send out this full report for the first round and receive feedback from the Board.

B) Childcare Career Advancement Initiative

- A Van Eaton: Thank you, W Blackmer for your work on this RFP. As a reminder it is an RFP valued at up to \$150,000 to support training for childcare workers. Thanks as well to R Wilson and S Dinka for your work on our subcommittee. The RFP has been finalized and J Mancina and W Blackmer are working on the next step which is to put it out via the City procurement process.
- V Choitz: What is the timeline?
- W Blackmer: That is a good question. We are in the queue so I think it will be released to the public within the next couple of weeks. I will notify the Board when it has been posted.
- V Choitz: How long did we give folks to submit a proposal?
- W Blackmer: Let me check on that. I think the minimum standard is 2 or 3 weeks, so it should be similar.
- V Choitz: I am assuming that the same subcommittee will meet to review proposals. Subcommittee agrees.

C) Professional Development for Adult Education Teachers and Workforce Professionals

- V Choitz: This is the priority #5 that we previously voted on. The idea here is that teachers or workforce trainers who need to attend a professional development workshop, conference, or training can do so with these funds to improve their education and training offerings. It would be a scholarship-type fund. There are some examples that I know about including the link on the memo from the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals. This training covers the basics of workforce development including serving clients, utilizing labor market information, etc. So, for example, an employee at SCC or CAAS could sign up for this training in order to help their clients better access the public workforce system and they could receive funding from the Trust in order to pay for their participation.

I want to ensure that we have the same idea on how this fund could be used and then give City Staff the go ahead to draft a program with consideration to the size of the fund, eligibility requirements, and the administration process.

- T Bent: How would this be put out as an RFP?
- V Choitz: A similar fund we have talked about is the Job Training Scholarship Fund for individuals not enrolled in one of our cohort-funded opportunities. If the fund is \$50,000, it would carry an administrative fee of \$6-7,000 in which case it would be below the \$10,000 cut off for which the City's procurement process would be required. We would recommend starting with a relatively small pot and seeing how it works for interested individuals.
- T Bent: Would a group like SCALE be able to apply, or could it also be individual teachers that want to access professional development?
- V Choitz: It would be great to have this open to both organizations and individuals.
- C Moran: I agree with keeping it open and welcome to both.

- V Choitz: W Blackmer and J Mancina will work on a draft plan for the March or April meeting regarding this topic, and then we could possibly tee this up for a vote at the May meeting.

D) Feasibility Study on Municipal Apprenticeship & Training Program Connecting Somerville residents to quality City jobs.

- V Choitz: In our last meeting, we said that A Van Eaton, J Mancina, W Blackmer, and I would meet with the community advocates who had proposed the municipal apprenticeship to figure out what challenges they wanted to address with this program. We met with the group and the municipal apprenticeship idea is not completely formed. Implementing an apprenticeship can be a big lift. So, we landed at our original idea to fund a feasibility study for a municipal apprenticeship program that would answer questions like: What would a municipal apprenticeship look like? What occupations would be targeted? What do other municipal apprenticeships look like around the country? What are some unique challenges of municipal apprenticeships compared to private sector apprenticeships? At our May meeting, we could make a vote on designating funding for this study.

At the same time, we want to take action more immediately to address the City's hiring challenges and connecting Somerville residents to these vacancies. The idea would be to put out an industry-specific RFP in which we targeted the City position with the highest number of vacancies (DPW). It would be a partnership with an adult education provider and training provider, along with the City and the municipal union.

- T Bent: Who was the meeting with?
- V Choitz: Marianne Walles, SEIU staffperson and the original proposal, Ed Halloran from the Somerville Municipal Employees Association (SMEA), and Greg Hill from Somerville Stands Together.
- T Bent: Was there anyone from the City?
- V Choitz: J Mancina did some research on hiring needs and tried to pull some data from HR, but there has been no response yet, and combine this information with SMEA's knowledge.
- T Bent: We would need to know that the City is onboard with this idea and confirm their hiring needs. Instead of an apprenticeship program we could put out an RFP for a CDL training program. Apprenticeship programs need to be focused in on one specific trade or role. We can create a natural pipeline from vocational high school programs into the City.
- V Choitz: Yes, there are 3 strands in my mind:
 - 1) talent pipeline from high school and adult ed into City employment. This is a coordination solution, not really a need for funding.
 - 2) municipal apprenticeship feasibility study
 - 3) implement a CDL training or similar training that addresses current hiring needs promptly
- T Bent: Would a feasibility study come up with results? Are these models in existence in other cities?
- V Choitz: Yes I was a co-author on a study that looked into this minimally and there are municipal apprenticeship that the study's consultant could interview. It feels to me more like a \$10,000 study. It would also mean taking to individuals within the City of Somerville. We should draft up a scope of work related to the feasibility study and put this on the docket for the May meeting.

- V Choitz: In terms of strand 3, the short-term training program, this might need some more discussion among the group. For next meeting, J Mancia, let's push for this data to know the top 10 vacancies in the City: position name and credentialing requirements. Let us try to sketch some sort of proposal needs statement based on this data.
- T Galligani: We can have a conversation with the DPW Director and a conversation with HR to get a more qualitative take on the skills needed and the hiring challenge.
- T Bent: When you search City of Somerville job postings, you can see what jobs are currently open.
- R Wilson: I like the idea of doing something like a training to channel residents into these vacancies as soon as possible. The residents will appreciate this.

4. Previously Approved Investments

W Blackmer: At the last meeting, the Board voted for staff to draft a plan on how to administer the unspent balance of \$22,254 in the student emergency plan. We have reached out to all the grantees and scheduled a meeting for this Thursday to talk about their plans for disbursing funds and the required documentation that City staff will need for processing these expenditures. This money is going to individuals who are currently enrolled in JCRT trainings or graduated from JCRT trainings in 2021 and are experiencing any sort of emergency-related need.

V Choitz: At our next meeting, W Blackmer will be able to report exactly what was done to get the money out to the organizations.

5. Any Items Unanticipated by the Chair?

T Bent: The mayor and chamber of commerce recently hosted a meeting with developers and I was reminding developers to be more involved in informing the City and JCRT about incoming tenants and hiring needs so that we can adequately prepare residents. I will keep you in the loop on this development and information I learn from these meetings.

W Blackmer: J Mancia and I have been researching to learn more about hiring needs of potential tenants as the life sciences buildings begin to open and we are looking forward to continued collaboration with developers.

T Bent: Mass General Brigham has a maintenance facility in the Inner Belt. We should discuss if we can connect a pipeline for students into these types of roles that are also relevant to these new lab buildings.

C Moran: I am happy to meet and help with that.

6. Meeting Adjournment

- Motion: A Van Eaton makes motion to adjourn. T Bent seconded.
- Roll Call Vote: Motion passes 7-0 to adjourn at 7:09PM.
JT Scott had to leave meeting before motion to adjourn.

Meeting Documents

- Draft Job Creation & Retention Trust Meeting Minutes 1/14/2022
- February 2022 JCRT Memo

Minutes approved on 3/15/2022.